Violence as the Cause of Jewish Flight from Poland, 1945–1946

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Abstract

This article discusses the violence against the Jews as a factor affecting the postwar emigration of Jewish survivors from Poland. The author assumes that violence was related to the exclusion of Jews from the Polish national community. However, this exclusion was of a complex nature and took place primarily not on the political or institutional level, but on the level of social ties. In some part of Polish society Jews were perceived as "others", "redundant people" or even enemies. Postwar emancipation proclaimed by the communists resulted in the policy of inclusion and made Jews equal, although in practice, even during the so-called Jewish autonomy (1945–1949), there were no equal rights in all areas (e.g. restitution of property). In times of social, economic and political crisis, the emigration of Jews was a favorable phenomenon for the authorities. Thus, the communist government did not encourage emigration, but rather turned a blind eye to it.

Keywords: emigration; exclusion; ethnic marginalization; Polish-Jewish relations; violence; antisemitism

Introduction

This article discusses the violence against the Jews as a factor behind the postwar emigration of Jewish survivors from Poland. Its main goal is to draw attention to the fact that the threat of violence was the main reason for Jews to leave the country, even before the pogrom in Kielce (4 July 1946). The article also points out that the postwar violence against Jews displayed some features of ethnic cleansing but, according to the author's findings, it does not fully meet the definition of this crime.

Although postwar antisemitic harassment is well known and described by historians, there are no separate, monographic studies that would show the real correlation between the waves of violence and the flight of Jews from Poland in the first months after the war. Obviously, the flight of Jews due to antisemitism is a thesis that often appears in the academic debate – especially in the context of Bricha (Hebrew: 'escape' or 'flight'), illegal immigration to Palestine organized by Zionists – but, in my opinion, it has not been given careful attention so far.

The literature on both illegal immigration and antisemitism is enormous. The Bricha has been researched by both Polish and foreign historians. Two fundamental works in this respect are Yehuda Bauer's *Flight and Rescue: Brichah. The Organized Escape of the Jewish Survivors of Eastern Europe, 1944–1948*, published in the United States in 1970 (Bauer, 1970), and David Engel's *Beyn shihrur li-veriha: Nitsolei ha Shoah be-Polin veha-maavak al hanhagatam, 1944–1946*, published in Israel in 1996 (Engel, 1996; see also Albrich, 1998; Aschauer-Smolik & Steidl, 2010; Hadari, 1991; Leibner, 2017; Naor, 1987). The Jewish postwar emigration from Poland was described also by Polish scholars, including Natalia Aleksiun, Dariusz Stola, Jerzy Tomaszewski, Bożena Szaynok and Albert Stankowski, who discussed the approach of government agencies and Jewish organizations to this phenomenon, its statistics and the course it followed (Aleksiun, 2002; Stankowski, 1997; Stola, 2017; Szaynok, 2000, 2012; Tomaszewski, 2002).

The turning points in the historiography of antisemitic violence in Poland were the books *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, 1941* (Gross, 2001) and *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Gross, 2006) by Jan Tomasz Gross.[1] Both triggered a nationwide, stormy discussion about Polish-Jewish relations. The critics, including a large group of historians, accused Gross of misinterpretations, selective treatment of archival sources, generalizations and ignoring the broad political and sociological context of anti-Jewish violence (see Forecki, 2010; Gądek, 2008; Gross, 2003; Krupa, 2018). However, it cannot be denied that it was Gross who caused the intensification of research on this issue and the consideration of antisemitism not only in relation to

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institutional violence, but, first of all, to social one. Perhaps his best known interpretation is that the Holocaust took place among the public, in front of witnesses and in front of the crowds. In this way, anti-Jewish violence had become normal and ordinary, which would also explain the occurrence of postwar antisemitism. Gross wrote about an "unwritten social contract" which allowed the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" to be bypassed by persecutors in relation to Jews after the war (Gross, 2008, p. 165).

Anti-Jewish Violence as a Subject of Research

Since the publication of Gross' books, many studies have appeared on pogroms and anti-Jewish harassment in postwar Poland. The literature on this subject is extremely large, including works which aim at an objective description of events, as well as theoretical ones, which try to describe the models of violence. There is no place in this article to quote and discuss each title, however, we should mention the works by, among others, Andrzej Żbikowski, Alina Cała, August Grabski, Alina Skibińska, Barbara Engelking, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Dariusz Libionka, Marcin Zaremba, Bożena Szaynok, Karolina Panz, Anna Cichopek-Gajraj and Łukasz Krzyżanowski as those who contributed to a more complete interpretation of violence against Jews, its causes and effects, also on a regional microscale (Cała, 2014; Cichopek-Gajraj, 2014; Engelking, 1993; Grabski, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2016; Libionka, 2006; Panz, 2015; Skibińska, 2007; Szaynok, 1992; Tokarska-Bakir, 2018; Zaremba, 2012; Żbikowski, 2012). Their research also shows that not only low-life people were involved in the pogroms. The war impoverished society materially, but also caused the "moral collapse" described by Gross (Zaremba, 2012, p. 631). In this context, in my research I draw on the thesis of collective violence proposed by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir. Her works help to understand the process of excluding Jews from the social community. She refers, among others, to the concept of crowd by Elias Canetti, and to social rituals as conceived by the anthropologist Victor Turner (Tokarska-Bakir, 2012). Tokarska-Bakir also attaches importance to collective perceptions (ritual myth, blood libel) that functioned in society – in crisis situations they became the driving force behind the collective spectacles, the postwar pogroms (Tokarska-Bakir, 2018).

All the above mentioned authors confirm in their research the large scale of anti-Jewish violence. For a long time, however, historians used approximate numbers of victims, and the difference in scale was large: from 300 to 2,000 people. Only in 2021 a monograph, devoted to hostility towards Jews in 1944–1947 was published (Kwiek, 2021). Authored by Julian Kwiek, is the first scientifically well-documented attempt to gauge the scale of the antisemitic violence that swept the country right after the war. According to Kwiek's calculations, at least from 1,074 to 1,121 Jews died as a result of pogroms, tumults, collective harassment and individual murders of varying intensity. The murders of Jews took place in at least 365 localities; most of them (82%) were perpetrated in the Lublin, Kielce, Rzeszów,

Białystok and Kraków voivodships. The most dangerous year was 1945, when about 650 Jews were killed. The author draws important conclusions on the basis of the material he analyzed:

> We are dealing with postwar antisemitism not only in Poland. Anti-Jewish violence was evident in Slovakia, Hungary or other European countries [...]. However, with one exception: in Poland, the number of murdered Jews was very large, and the anti-Jewish violence was not local. Of the many attitudes towards Jews, it seems that indifference, aversion and hostility were the most evident [...]. In the vast majority of cases, civilians, and thus defenseless people, were the target of attacks. Among them, murdered women and children accounted for as much as 19% of the victims. (Kwiek, 2021, pp. 15, 209, 217)

Kwiek's study is an important factographic work, which serves as a reference point for further research on this difficult topic.

It should be mentioned that there are still voices trying to deny the mass scale of the persecutions, and there are different interpretations about the perpetrators or responsibility for the antisemitic crimes. Some researchers look for the causes of the wave of anti-Jewish violence mainly through the prism of externally imposed system of communist power. In such a narrative there are usually two basic elements: (1) the authorities, the army or the secret services act as secret provocateurs of anti-Jewish riots; (2) the main reason for the antisemitic sentiment is the participation of people of Jewish origin in the communist regime (the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, *Żydokomuna*). In this context, also the mass flight of Jewish survivors from Poland has some explanation: either it was the result of a secret communist plan, or the result of Zionist propaganda (or a secret agreement between the Zionists and the communists) (Chodakiewicz, 2008; Kamiński & Żaryn, 2006; Kowalik, 2007; Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 2016). Although the elements of provocation, or rather a certain consent to violence by law enforcement, cannot be completely ruled out, in the face of the sources, the most important factor contributing to violence was the collective anti-Jewish mood of the perpetrators – inhabitants of Polish cities, towns and villages (Kersten, 1981).

This article addresses a seemingly well-known issue: postwar flight of Jews from Poland was caused by collective violence. By 1947, more than half of the survivors had left the country. It was then that the centuries-old Jewish settlement in Poland came to a symbolic end. This knowledge is common and repeated in almost every article and book on this subject. So far, however, researchers have not addressed this flight and its scale as a separate process with specific causes and serious effects. Their attention is rather focused on the mechanisms of antisemitism and the postwar violence itself, whose culmination was the pogrom in Kielce. I propose a slightly different research perspective, where collective violence becomes a means of removing the unwanted group from society. It is not only about the act of violence in the "age of aggressive mob" (Engel, 1996, p. 35), but about making the unwanted community disappear, that is, leave.

In the first two years after the war the decisions of the survivors to leave (emigrate) were made in an atmosphere of constant fear. Physical violence was accompanied by

verbal one – pogrom rituals included slogans calling on Jews to leave Poland (Tokarska-Bakir, 2012). As the source research shows, each case of murder or violence caused a vivid reaction among the traumatized Jewish community, and multiplied by rumors, it often led to a local panic and, as a result, to decisions to leave Poland.

By analyzing archival materials produced by state agencies and institutions, as well as the literature of historians dealing with postwar violence, I try to show that postwar antisemitism was characterized by the intention of excluding Jews from society and forcing them to leave the country. In this study, I refer to the sociological concepts of collective behavior and violence (Nijakowski, 2013), whose emanation, according Herbert Blumer's typology, is the acting crowd (Blumer, 1969). At the same time, however, I would like to point out that the expulsion of Jews from society did not take place only in a collective manner. Acts of violence also occurred at the level of individual relationships and micro-community (neighbors). Apart from the violent nature of Jewish exclusion, another important fact is that no effort was made to counteract it firmly on the institutional and political levels.

The Unbroken Stream

Before World War II Poland was home to the largest European Jewish community, estimated at 3.3 million people. Only about 13% survived the Holocaust. By July 1946, after a wave of repatriations from the territory of the Soviet Union (where most of the Polish Jews had survived), the number of Jews in Poland had grown to about 220,000, but soon the majority of them decided to go abroad.

Indeed, from the very moment the German occupation was over, Jewish refugees were leaving Poland in an unbroken stream. They left for Western European countries, the United States and Canada, but one of their main destinations was Palestine, which went against the immigration policy of Great Britain, whose protectorate extended over the region and which introduced strict quotas for Jewish settlers. For this reason, the Jewish flight to the Middle East went through illegal channels. The effort of organizing illegal Jewish emigration in Europe was taken by various organizations like the Zionist parties, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish military organization Hagana (Aleksiun, 2002). The underground organization which coordinated the flight was widely known as Bricha (which means 'flight' or 'escape' in Hebrew). From 1945, the migration of Jews – especially from the eastern part of Europe – became mass-scale and was organized in nature, with over 250,000 men and women leaving until 1948. The main and the largest stream of refugees came from Poland and was estimated at about 140,000 people. In fact, it was more than a half of the survivors who were in Poland after the war (Bauer, 1970).

The reasons for their departures varied greatly. The communists, who, supported by the USSR, had assumed power in the country, guaranteed equality and declared that the sur-

viving Jewish population could count on receiving aid. And indeed, until 1949 the official political line of the communist authorities towards the Jewish population assumed a sizable margin of liberalism and pluralism (see the next section below). However, it quickly turned out that many Jews did not want to stay in the country. Researchers often cite the results of a study conducted by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which investigated the issues of Palestine and whose report from 1946 diagnosed the main causes of Jewish emigration as follows: the desire to re-join the family, the hope to build a new life in Palestine, coupled with the belief in Zionist principles, the unwillingness to live in a land that was a "Jewish cemetery", the dislike of the communist rule, which assumed a break-up with the traditional economic model, and the fear of repressions (*Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 20 Apr. 1946*, n.d.). Above all, however, one more factor destabilized the situation of the traumatized Jewish population in Poland – the antisemitic violence (Aleksiun, 2002; Stola, 2017; Szaynok, 1992).

Right after the war Poland witnessed several hundred antisemitic "incidents" (pogroms, riots, group harassment, lone killings) of varying intensity and with diverse perpetrators, which caused the deaths of 1,100 Jews (Kwiek, 2021). Acts of aggression against the Jews were caused by a number of interlocking factors: the postwar demoralization and banalization of evil, antisemitic stereotypes, criminal attacks and feuds between neighbors related to former Jewish possessions looted during the war by the occupiers and now appropriated by the Polish population. Owing to the postwar chaos, poverty and easy access to firearms, no one could feel safe, regardless of their origins (Zaremba, 2012). But what was characteristic to violence against the Jews was the inertia that accompanied it. Until the Kielce pogrom, neither pogroms nor "incidents" aroused any effective protest in society or met with a decisive reaction from the authorities.

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (2015) points out that the motive behind the collective violence was a fear of various threats personified by the Jews, those threats being communism (*Żydokomuna*), the return of Jewish repatriates from the USSR, and a fear of ritual killings and Jewish freemasonry, in which a part of Polish society firmly believed. The archetype of a communist Jew – agitator and worker, known from nineteenth-century novels – had undergone an evolution. Under the influence of the revolution in Russia, he turned into a ruthless Bolshevik and *apparatchik*. The opponents of the new regime perceived the Jews, collectively, as its living emanation and at the same time an easy target for venting their frustrations. The actual attitude of the Jews to communism, the affection the Jewish *apparatchiks* may have felt towards their roots, or the possible reasons for the support lent by some Jews to the new political system (among those reasons being their experience of the Holocaust and their lack of sense of security, which made them perceive the communist Left as the only guarantor of safety) – none of that really mattered (Hanebrink, 2018; Kersten, 1992, pp. 76–88; Paczkowski, 2000; Schatz, 2020; Śpiewak, 2012).

The stereotype of Judeo-Bolshevism generated a collective responsibility. Among the Jewish victims of pogroms and executions there were some supporters of the new

regime, but the majority were chance persons, including women and children. Neither was every act of violence grounded in antisemitism. According to Kwiek, wherever it was possible to establish the background of the crime, it was shown that statistically more of the murders were clearly antisemitic in nature, while some were motivated by criminal intent, mainly robbery (Kwiek, 2021, pp. 219–223). In some cases, the two factors could overlap. Interestingly, among the victims there were only 84 people identified with the new government (militiamen, soldiers, employees of the communist security apparatus, members of the communist party).

International Dimension

The issue of the violence against the Jews aroused international controversies, because it worked against Great Britain's uncompromising anti-immigration policy. On 1 January 1946, during a press conference in Frankfurt, Frederick E. Morgan, a lieutenant general of the British Army and the Chief of Operations for the UNRRA in Europe, apprised the world of thousands of Polish Jews arriving to the West aided by a "secret Jewish force" with huge funds at its disposal. His very roughly phrased announcement caused an international scandal. Morgan's remark that was the most widely commented on in the media was the one in which he questioned the truth of the information about the antisemitic incidents in Poland. In his opinion, the refugees from Poland did not have the look of persecuted people ("UNRRA chief in Germany slurs Polish Jews", 1946; "Weizmann calls Morgan statement on Polish Jews 'palpably anti-Semitic'", 1946), and – in his opinion – the entire action was intended to pressurize the United Nations organization into supporting the idea of creating a Jewish state. His view was immediately taken over by the British press as a strong argument against the version of events with a focus on antisemitism as presented by the Zionists, and at the same time it caused a fierce outcry among the American and Palestinian Jews (*Daily Mirror*, 3 January 1946; "Jewish refugees now have pipeline to Palestine", 1946).

Morgan's statement was put in question by the already mentioned report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, issued in May 1946, and the report submitted by Judge Simon H. Rifkind, special adviser for Jewish affairs to General Joseph T. McNarney, the military governor of the American-occupied zone in Germany. Just two days after Morgan's conference, at a meeting with journalists Rifkind highlighted the fact that the cause of the Jews' mass departures from Poland was the hostility of the local population: "The proverbial 99 and 44/100 per cent are leaving Poland under a sense of compulsion – genuine or imagined. The predominant factor for the flight from Poland is fear. Jews fleeing out of Poland are [...] fleeing for their lives", said Judge Rifkind (*The New York Times*, 4 January 1946; "Rifkind declares Jews flee in fear", 1946), adding that a speedy and permanent settlement process was the only solution to the problem of the Jewish displaced persons.

Those two versions regarding the cause of the Jews' mass migration, namely, antisemitism and the planned activity of Zionist organizations wishing to bring as many refugees as possible to Palestine – each version justified by facts – were made use of during the international political debate on the issue of the Middle East (Semczyszyn, 2018).

The Levels of Exclusion

We can assume that the violence against the Jews was related to their exclusion from the Polish national community. However, this exclusion was of a complex nature and took place primarily not on the political or institutional level, but on the level of social ties. In some part of Polish society Jews were perceived as "others", "redundant people" or even enemies. The intention of the perpetrators of antisemitic harassment was the social exclusion of Jews. Following Cezary Żołędowski, I assume that the term "exclusion" means an extreme form of discrimination, the expulsion of a given ethnic group outside the community (Żołędowski, 2005, p. 98). It is a truism to say that contempt or aversion to Jews were not an emanation of the views of Polish society as a whole. However, those feelings had to be common enough to leave an imprint on the collective memory of Holocaust survivors.

On the face of it, public mood contrasted with the official political line of the communist authorities towards the Jewish population, which was favorable and assumed a sizable margin of liberalism. The postwar emancipation proclaimed by the communists had all the hallmarks of an inclusive policy and equal rights for Jews, something that they did not have before 1939. Jewish social and cultural institutions were established in cities, as were several organizations and parties. Also production cooperatives, schools, newspapers, cinemas, theaters and youth kibbutzim were instituted. The Jews were granted unlimited access to university education and administrative jobs. In contrast to the Soviet Union, left-wing and centrist Zionist organizations, which openly encouraged the Jews' departure for Palestine, operated legally in Poland. In the western borderland – the former German lands which had recently been incorporated into Poland (the regions of Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania) – to where more Jewish repatriates from the USSR had been directed, an attempt was made to create a *yidisher yishev* (Jewish settlement) project (Aleksiun, 2002; Kichelewski, 2021; Rykała, 2007; Wasserstein, 1997).

On the other hand, the declared inclusive policy was only of a propaganda character in many dimensions. Legally operating Jewish organizations were under surveillance by the secret political police. For the first two years after the end of the war, despite repeated requests, the authorities were unable to cope with the waves of antisemitic harassment and ensure the safety of Jews. In addition, Jewish citizens had problems with the restitution of private and communal property confiscated by the Nazis and taken over by the state treasury or by the new, private owners after the war (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014; Kuklík, 2017).

From the point of view of internal policy, the mass emigration of Jews suited the authorities in Poland. Before World War II national minorities had accounted for over 30% of the population, which caused many problems and conflicts. As a result of the war, the Holocaust, the deportations and border shifts, Poland became almost monoethnic. For the new authorities it seemed to be a good change because the state was easier to manage, especially under the conditions of an undemocratic system. The communist government had no social legitimacy but had a lot of problems with the economic situation, the opposition, armed underground, and also problems with remnants of national minorities like Ukrainians. And Jews also posed a problem for the communist government due to such issues as property restitution, assimilation and the hostile attitude towards them in some part of Polish society. The emigration of the Jews meant that at least one problem would be solved by itself. Thus, the communist government did not encourage or interfere in the mass flight of Jews, but rather turned a blind eye to it.

Violence as a Factor of Escape Before the Kielce Pogrom

The most glaring form of exclusion was open aggression against Jews, which had a significant impact on the attitudes towards emigration and on the activity of the Bricha in Poland. Source research has demonstrated that each case of murder or violence triggered a vigorous reaction among the Jewish community traumatized by the Holocaust and, multiplied by rumor, caused a local panic and resulted in decisions to leave Poland.

Before the Kielce pogrom, the pro-departure mood had intensified, among others, in the aftermath of the Cracow pogrom (11 August 1945). The Jews were already falling prey to violence in the chaos of the last months of the war. On 13 August 1944, the managing board of the Jewish Committee in Lublin called a meeting to discuss the safety of the survivors, where acts of assault against the Jews in the Lublin region were discussed (Cała, 2014). In October 1944, the head of the Jewish Section at the Polish Committee of National Liberation, Shlomo Hershenhorn, wrote in a report: "In Izbica, Sandomierz and Tarnobrzeg the population is hostile towards the Jews and for this reason they want to leave the country" (Archiwum Akt Nowych [hereinafter AAN], Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego [hereinafter PKWN], XI/6, fol. 19).

The communists disseminated a statement according to which the responsibility for anti-Jewish violence after the war lied with the anti-communist underground movement, linked with the government in exile. This was a fruit of the propaganda of the day, intended for use in the current political struggle; but this does not mean that the Polish guerrillas were entirely innocent – among the perpetrators of murders committed on Jews there were members of anti-communist underground units (Bańkowska et al., 2009; Grabski, 2019; Kończal, 2020; Kopciowski, 2007; Tokarska-Bakir, 2017).

On 17 February 1945, in the small locality of Sokoły, units commanded by Kazimierz "Huzar" Kamiński from the Citizens' Home Army (Armia Krajowa Obywatelska, AKO) and Karol "Zemsta" Gasztoft from the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ) murdered seven Jews, including a four-year-old girl and a thirteen-year-old boy (Pyżewska, 2005). A day later, the unit commanded by Józef "Wołyniak" Zadzierski (NSZ and National Military Organization, Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa, NOW) murdered ten Jews, including three children, in Leżajsk (Surdej, 2018). Two months later, a report of the Armed Forces Delegation (Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych, DSZ) read as follows:

> The continuing anti-Jewish action, conducted mainly by the National Military Union (Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe, NZW), frightened the Jews and made [them] emigrate to the West. Generally, they used to engage in trade and had special privileges. Currently we can see, and hear, complaints that they have nothing to do here. Russia, too, ceased to exist for them. (Surdej, 2018, p. 338)

Most of the postwar assaults remain the work of "unknown perpetrators". Only in March 1945 there were 117 cases of brutal assault committed against Jews, of which 108 ended in death: 21 in Białystok voivodship, 33 in Lublin voivodship, 35 in Warszawa voivodship, 23 in Rzeszów voivodship and 5 in Kielce voivodship (AAN, Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej [hereinafter MAP], file no. 786). In April 1945, officials of the Nationalities Section of the Political Department at the Ministry of Public Administration reported that "in some part of Polish society the mood is exceedingly antisemitic" and added that in the territories liberated from under the German occupation (mostly in the Lublin and Białystok lands) some 130 Jews had been murdered for antisemitic reasons, because of which "the pro-emigration mood is on the increase. Jews are leaving illegally for Romania and Czechoslovakia [...]. About a hundred Jews departed from Częstochowa alone. The illegal emigration of Jews from Poland to Palestine through Romania is probably coordinated by some Zionist elements" (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie [hereinafter AIPN BU] 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 163).

In the summer of 1945 another wave of persecution against the Jewish population was on the rise. The first large-scale riots occurred on 11 and 12 June 1945 in Rzeszów, resulting in the survivors' departing from the city *en masse* (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 140). The next pogrom took place on 11 August 1945 in Cracow – the mob beat and wounded some Jews, and one person, the 56-year-old Róża Berger, was killed by a bullet that pierced the door of her flat. The impulse for the antisemitic violence was given by the rumors, repeated in the entire country, about the ritual killings of Polish children perpetrated by the Jews; a groundless but long-established excuse. After the pogrom, the number of illegal emigrants increased at once and the Voivodship Office in Cracow was flooded with applications for departure from Poland (Cichopek-Gajraj, 2014).

Information about the "emigration panic" or "pro-emigration mood" quickly became a rhetorical figure, repeated in almost every report that described the situation of the Jewish

population in Poland. According to those documents, as early as in 1945 the main reason for the "pro-emigration mood" was the lack of sense of security caused by the frequent antisemitic murders and "excesses": "The pro-emigration mood is very strong and wide-spread", reads a Ministry of Public Administration report from early August 1945, so one written just before the Cracow pogrom and almost a year before the Kielce pogrom, "the majority of the Jewish population is waiting for legal emigration, and a few Jews are emigrating illegally, mostly to Palestine" (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 140). The number of Jews choosing the latter option was growing from month to month.

Another effect of the "pogrom atmosphere" was the influx of Jews from smaller localities to larger ones; in these cases, the decision to emigrate was taken afterwards. Over the next six months before the Kielce pogrom the situation did not improve, even though the authorities issued a declaration promising to fight antisemitism. The anti-Jewish atmosphere was fueled by the arrival of a wave of Jewish repatriates from the USSR. Attacks on repatriation transports and cases of Jews being dragged out of passenger trains claimed an unknown number of lives. Politically motivated murders and killings related to acts of assault and robbery continued to occur. In the period between January and September 1946 at least 162 Jews were killed (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [hereinafter AŻIH], Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce [hereinafter CKŻP], 303/I/11, fol. 143–145). On 5 February 1946, a unit of the Freedom and Independence organization (Wolność i Niezawisłość, WiN) commanded by Leon "Jastrząb" Taraszkiewicz attacked the small town of Parczew in the Lublin region, vandalizing and looting Jewish shops and homes; three Jews were killed. After this event, the Jewish community of Parczew, some 200 people altogether, left the town in panic.

Some events that greatly stirred the Jewish community, including the Bricha activists, took place still before the Kielce pogrom. Throughout the late April and early May 1946, a total of 25 Jews (12 women, 10 men and 3 children aged 12 to 14) were killed in the Podhale region. All of them were *en route* to Slovakia, from where they wanted to cross, illegally, into the American occupation zone in Germany. They were killed by the guerrillas from the unit commanded by Józef "Ogień" Kuraś (Panz, 2015). These killings caused a widespread panic and an uncontrolled wave of departures from Poland. Citing data obtained from the former members of Bricha, Yehuda Bauer estimates the number of Jews who crossed the border into Czechoslovakia in the period between 10 and 16 May 1946 in the vicinity of Kudowa in Lower Silesia, for which they made use of the services of local smugglers, at some 800 men and women (Bauer, 1970). After the wave of killings, the Bricha ceased to send refugees by the southern route towards Slovakia, which in any case was at that time still being used only by Zionists from Cracow and Katowice.

The Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP) activists sent many petitions concerning "the Jewish population's catastrophic state of security" (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 133). After the Cracow pogrom, they addressed, among others, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry

of Justice, demanding that a decree on fighting antisemitism be issued (AIPN BU 1572/48, fol. 71). They proposed that all the Jewish organizations and institutions be issued firearms, that the cases of antisemitism be reported to foreign press, and that the perpetrators of pogroms and murders be routinely sentenced to death (AŻIH, CKŻP, 303/I/11, fol. 64–66). Subsequent petitions were submitted in June 1946 after a series of attacks against Jews traveling on passenger trains, and killings of Jews perpetrated again in the Podhale region by the guerrillas of Captain "Ogień" (AŻIH, CKŻP, 303/I/11, fol. 144–145). By the end of June 1946, at least 46,000 Jews illegally left Poland.

Conclusion: Escape, Ethnic Cleansing or Emigration?

There are some semantic doubts and terminological confusions about the question which term is better for the description of Jewish departures from Poland. The word "emigration" brings up an association with voluntary departure. By contrast, the Hebrew word "Bricha", which means 'escape', is associated with a dangerous situation and necessity. If Bricha was a forced migration, does it mean that we should consider it as a case of ethnic cleansing? According to the Final Report of the Commission of Experts on the Former Yugoslavia (S/1994/674), the definition of ethnic cleansing presupposes the existence of identified perpetrators who commanded the action of systematic forced removal of ethnic groups from a given area with the intent of making a region ethnically homogeneous. In my opinion, it is difficult to point out one specific center that directed the anti-Jewish violence and pogroms after 1944 in Poland and one critical reason for these acts. At the same time, however, these crimes and pogroms had some characteristics of ethnic cleansing as they amounted to attempts of forced removal of the whole ethnic group from a specific area (city, village, region). Undoubtedly, this thread opens up new interpretative possibilities for researchers.

The Holocaust certainly influenced the feeling of marginalization and exclusion among the survivors in Poland. The destruction of the Jewish world caused a sense of loneliness and increased the fear. After the war, the political idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine met with a huge, massive desire to find a way out of the situation in which the survivors found themselves. And for that reason, the post-catastrophic Zionism became more than just a doctrine but also a chance for a new life for thousands of traumatized people. It is believed that the Zionists would not have been able to implement the idea of an independent Jewish state in the Middle East in such a short time if the moods among the survivors in Europe were different. But it was anxiety and fear that dominated among them, coupled with an unwillingness to stay in the land where entire Jewish families and communities were murdered by the Nazis.

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Przemoc jako powód wyjazdów Żydów z Polski w latach 1945–1946

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia przemoc jako czynnik wpływający na powojenną emigrację ocalałych Żydów z Polski. Autorka zakłada, że przemoc wiązała się z wykluczeniem Żydów z polskiej wspólnoty narodowej. Wykluczenie to miało jednak złożony charakter i odbywało się w pierwszej kolejności nie na poziomie politycznym czy instytucjonalnym, ale na poziomie więzi społecznych. Przez część społeczeństwa polskiego Żydzi byli postrzegani jako „inni", „ludzie zbędni", a nawet wrogowie. Proklamowana przez komunistów powojenna emancypacja zaowocowała polityką inkluzji i prawnym zrównaniem Żydów, choć w praktyce nawet w okresie tzw. autonomii żydowskiej (1945–1949) równouprawnienie nie dotyczyło wszystkich obszarów (np. restytucji mienia). W czasach kryzysu społecznego, gospodarczego i politycznego emigracja Żydów była zjawiskiem korzystnym dla władz. Dlatego też, choć rząd komunistyczny nie zachęcał do wyjazdów, to jednocześnie przymykał na nie oko.

Słowa kluczowe: emigracja; wykluczenie; marginalizacja etniczna; relacje polsko-żydowskie; przemoc; antysemityzm

Citation

institutional violence, but, first of all, to social one. Perhaps his best known interpretation is that the Holocaust took place among the public, in front of witnesses and in front of the crowds. In this way, anti-Jewish violence had become normal and ordinary, which would also explain the occurrence of postwar antisemitism. Gross wrote about an "unwritten social contract" which allowed the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" to be bypassed by persecutors in relation to Jews after the war (Gross, 2008, p. 165).

Anti-Jewish Violence as a Subject of Research

Since the publication of Gross' books, many studies have appeared on pogroms and anti-Jewish harassment in postwar Poland. The literature on this subject is extremely large, including works which aim at an objective description of events, as well as theoretical ones, which try to describe the models of violence. There is no place in this article to quote and discuss each title, however, we should mention the works by, among others, Andrzej Żbikowski, Alina Cała, August Grabski, Alina Skibińska, Barbara Engelking, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Dariusz Libionka, Marcin Zaremba, Bożena Szaynok, Karolina Panz, Anna Cichopek-Gajraj and Łukasz Krzyżanowski as those who contributed to a more complete interpretation of violence against Jews, its causes and effects, also on a regional microscale (Cała, 2014; Cichopek-Gajraj, 2014; Engelking, 1993; Grabski, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2016; Libionka, 2006; Panz, 2015; Skibińska, 2007; Szaynok, 1992; Tokarska-Bakir, 2018; Zaremba, 2012; Żbikowski, 2012). Their research also shows that not only low-life people were involved in the pogroms. The war impoverished society materially, but also caused the "moral collapse" described by Gross (Zaremba, 2012, p. 631). In this context, in my research I draw on the thesis of collective violence proposed by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir. Her works help to understand the process of excluding Jews from the social community. She refers, among others, to the concept of crowd by Elias Canetti, and to social rituals as conceived by the anthropologist Victor Turner (Tokarska-Bakir, 2012). Tokarska-Bakir also attaches importance to collective perceptions (ritual myth, blood libel) that functioned in society – in crisis situations they became the driving force behind the collective spectacles, the postwar pogroms (Tokarska-Bakir, 2018).

All the above mentioned authors confirm in their research the large scale of anti-Jewish violence. For a long time, however, historians used approximate numbers of victims, and the difference in scale was large: from 300 to 2,000 people. Only in 2021 a monograph, devoted to hostility towards Jews in 1944–1947 was published (Kwiek, 2021). Authored by Julian Kwiek, is the first scientifically well-documented attempt to gauge the scale of the antisemitic violence that swept the country right after the war. According to Kwiek's calculations, at least from 1,074 to 1,121 Jews died as a result of pogroms, tumults, collective harassment and individual murders of varying intensity. The murders of Jews took place in at least 365 localities; most of them (82%) were perpetrated in the Lublin, Kielce, Rzeszów,

Białystok and Kraków voivodships. The most dangerous year was 1945, when about 650 Jews were killed. The author draws important conclusions on the basis of the material he analyzed:

> We are dealing with postwar antisemitism not only in Poland. Anti-Jewish violence was evident in Slovakia, Hungary or other European countries […]. However, with one exception: in Poland, the number of murdered Jews was very large, and the anti-Jewish violence was not local. Of the many attitudes towards Jews, it seems that indifference, aversion and hostility were the most evident […]. In the vast majority of cases, civilians, and thus defenseless people, were the target of attacks. Among them, murdered women and children accounted for as much as 19% of the victims. (Kwiek, 2021, pp. 15, 209, 217)

Kwiek's study is an important factographic work, which serves as a reference point for further research on this difficult topic.

It should be mentioned that there are still voices trying to deny the mass scale of the persecutions, and there are different interpretations about the perpetrators or responsibility for the antisemitic crimes. Some researchers look for the causes of the wave of anti-Jewish violence mainly through the prism of externally imposed system of communist power. In such a narrative there are usually two basic elements: (1) the authorities, the army or the secret services act as secret provocateurs of anti-Jewish riots; (2) the main reason for the antisemitic sentiment is the participation of people of Jewish origin in the communist regime (the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, *Żydokomuna*). In this context, also the mass flight of Jewish survivors from Poland has some explanation: either it was the result of a secret communist plan, or the result of Zionist propaganda (or a secret agreement between the Zionists and the communists) (Chodakiewicz, 2008; Kamiński & Żaryn, 2006; Kowalik, 2007; Śmietanka-Kruszelnicki, 2016). Although the elements of provocation, or rather a certain consent to violence by law enforcement, cannot be completely ruled out, in the face of the sources, the most important factor contributing to violence was the collective anti-Jewish mood of the perpetrators – inhabitants of Polish cities, towns and villages (Kersten, 1981).

This article addresses a seemingly well-known issue: postwar flight of Jews from Poland was caused by collective violence. By 1947, more than half of the survivors had left the country. It was then that the centuries-old Jewish settlement in Poland came to a symbolic end. This knowledge is common and repeated in almost every article and book on this subject. So far, however, researchers have not addressed this flight and its scale as a separate process with specific causes and serious effects. Their attention is rather focused on the mechanisms of antisemitism and the postwar violence itself, whose culmination was the pogrom in Kielce. I propose a slightly different research perspective, where collective violence becomes a means of removing the unwanted group from society. It is not only about the act of violence in the "age of aggressive mob" (Engel, 1996, p. 35), but about making the unwanted community disappear, that is, leave.

In the first two years after the war the decisions of the survivors to leave (emigrate) were made in an atmosphere of constant fear. Physical violence was accompanied by

verbal one – pogrom rituals included slogans calling on Jews to leave Poland (Tokarska-Bakir, 2012). As the source research shows, each case of murder or violence caused a vivid reaction among the traumatized Jewish community, and multiplied by rumors, it often led to a local panic and, as a result, to decisions to leave Poland.

By analyzing archival materials produced by state agencies and institutions, as well as the literature of historians dealing with postwar violence, I try to show that postwar antisemitism was characterized by the intention of excluding Jews from society and forcing them to leave the country. In this study, I refer to the sociological concepts of collective behavior and violence (Nijakowski, 2013), whose emanation, according Herbert Blumer's typology, is the acting crowd (Blumer, 1969). At the same time, however, I would like to point out that the expulsion of Jews from society did not take place only in a collective manner. Acts of violence also occurred at the level of individual relationships and micro-community (neighbors). Apart from the violent nature of Jewish exclusion, another important fact is that no effort was made to counteract it firmly on the institutional and political levels.

The Unbroken Stream

Before World War II Poland was home to the largest European Jewish community, estimated at 3.3 million people. Only about 13% survived the Holocaust. By July 1946, after a wave of repatriations from the territory of the Soviet Union (where most of the Polish Jews had survived), the number of Jews in Poland had grown to about 220,000, but soon the majority of them decided to go abroad.

Indeed, from the very moment the German occupation was over, Jewish refugees were leaving Poland in an unbroken stream. They left for Western European countries, the United States and Canada, but one of their main destinations was Palestine, which went against the immigration policy of Great Britain, whose protectorate extended over the region and which introduced strict quotas for Jewish settlers. For this reason, the Jewish flight to the Middle East went through illegal channels. The effort of organizing illegal Jewish emigration in Europe was taken by various organizations like the Zionist parties, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish military organization Hagana (Aleksiun, 2002). The underground organization which coordinated the flight was widely known as Bricha (which means 'flight' or 'escape' in Hebrew). From 1945, the migration of Jews – especially from the eastern part of Europe – became mass-scale and was organized in nature, with over 250,000 men and women leaving until 1948. The main and the largest stream of refugees came from Poland and was estimated at about 140,000 people. In fact, it was more than a half of the survivors who were in Poland after the war (Bauer, 1970).

The reasons for their departures varied greatly. The communists, who, supported by the USSR, had assumed power in the country, guaranteed equality and declared that the sur-

viving Jewish population could count on receiving aid. And indeed, until 1949 the official political line of the communist authorities towards the Jewish population assumed a sizable margin of liberalism and pluralism (see the next section below). However, it quickly turned out that many Jews did not want to stay in the country. Researchers often cite the results of a study conducted by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which investigated the issues of Palestine and whose report from 1946 diagnosed the main causes of Jewish emigration as follows: the desire to re-join the family, the hope to build a new life in Palestine, coupled with the belief in Zionist principles, the unwillingness to live in a land that was a "Jewish cemetery", the dislike of the communist rule, which assumed a break-up with the traditional economic model, and the fear of repressions (*Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, 20 Apr. 1946*, n.d.). Above all, however, one more factor destabilized the situation of the traumatized Jewish population in Poland – the antisemitic violence (Aleksiun, 2002; Stola, 2017; Szaynok, 1992).

Right after the war Poland witnessed several hundred antisemitic "incidents" (pogroms, riots, group harassment, lone killings) of varying intensity and with diverse perpetrators, which caused the deaths of 1,100 Jews (Kwiek, 2021). Acts of aggression against the Jews were caused by a number of interlocking factors: the postwar demoralization and banalization of evil, antisemitic stereotypes, criminal attacks and feuds between neighbors related to former Jewish possessions looted during the war by the occupiers and now appropriated by the Polish population. Owing to the postwar chaos, poverty and easy access to firearms, no one could feel safe, regardless of their origins (Zaremba, 2012). But what was characteristic to violence against the Jews was the inertia that accompanied it. Until the Kielce pogrom, neither pogroms nor "incidents" aroused any effective protest in society or met with a decisive reaction from the authorities.

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (2015) points out that the motive behind the collective violence was a fear of various threats personified by the Jews, those threats being communism (*Żydokomuna*), the return of Jewish repatriates from the USSR, and a fear of ritual killings and Jewish freemasonry, in which a part of Polish society firmly believed. The archetype of a communist Jew – agitator and worker, known from nineteenth-century novels – had undergone an evolution. Under the influence of the revolution in Russia, he turned into a ruthless Bolshevik and *apparatchik*. The opponents of the new regime perceived the Jews, collectively, as its living emanation and at the same time an easy target for venting their frustrations. The actual attitude of the Jews to communism, the affection the Jewish *apparatchiks* may have felt towards their roots, or the possible reasons for the support lent by some Jews to the new political system (among those reasons being their experience of the Holocaust and their lack of sense of security, which made them perceive the communist Left as the only guarantor of safety) – none of that really mattered (Hanebrink, 2018; Kersten, 1992, pp. 76–88; Paczkowski, 2000; Schatz, 2020; Śpiewak, 2012).

The stereotype of Judeo-Bolshevism generated a collective responsibility. Among the Jewish victims of pogroms and executions there were some supporters of the new

regime, but the majority were chance persons, including women and children. Neither was every act of violence grounded in antisemitism. According to Kwiek, wherever it was possible to establish the background of the crime, it was shown that statistically more of the murders were clearly antisemitic in nature, while some were motivated by criminal intent, mainly robbery (Kwiek, 2021, pp. 219–223). In some cases, the two factors could overlap. Interestingly, among the victims there were only 84 people identified with the new government (militiamen, soldiers, employees of the communist security apparatus, members of the communist party).

International Dimension

The issue of the violence against the Jews aroused international controversies, because it worked against Great Britain's uncompromising anti-immigration policy. On 1 January 1946, during a press conference in Frankfurt, Frederick E. Morgan, a lieutenant general of the British Army and the Chief of Operations for the UNRRA in Europe, apprised the world of thousands of Polish Jews arriving to the West aided by a "secret Jewish force" with huge funds at its disposal. His very roughly phrased announcement caused an international scandal. Morgan's remark that was the most widely commented on in the media was the one in which he questioned the truth of the information about the antisemitic incidents in Poland. In his opinion, the refugees from Poland did not have the look of persecuted people ("UNRRA chief in Germany slurs Polish Jews", 1946; "Weizmann calls Morgan statement on Polish Jews 'palpably anti-Semitic'", 1946), and – in his opinion – the entire action was intended to pressurize the United Nations organization into supporting the idea of creating a Jewish state. His view was immediately taken over by the British press as a strong argument against the version of events with a focus on antisemitism as presented by the Zionists, and at the same time it caused a fierce outcry among the American and Palestinian Jews (*Daily Mirror*, 3 January 1946; "Jewish refugees now have pipeline to Palestine", 1946).

Morgan's statement was put in question by the already mentioned report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, issued in May 1946, and the report submitted by Judge Simon H. Rifkind, special adviser for Jewish affairs to General Joseph T. McNarney, the military governor of the American-occupied zone in Germany. Just two days after Morgan's conference, at a meeting with journalists Rifkind highlighted the fact that the cause of the Jews' mass departures from Poland was the hostility of the local population: "The proverbial 99 and 44/100 per cent are leaving Poland under a sense of compulsion – genuine or imagined. The predominant factor for the flight from Poland is fear. Jews fleeing out of Poland are […] fleeing for their lives", said Judge Rifkind (*The New York Times*, 4 January 1946; "Rifkind declares Jews flee in fear", 1946), adding that a speedy and permanent settlement process was the only solution to the problem of the Jewish displaced persons.

Those two versions regarding the cause of the Jews' mass migration, namely, antisemitism and the planned activity of Zionist organizations wishing to bring as many refugees as possible to Palestine – each version justified by facts – were made use of during the international political debate on the issue of the Middle East (Semczyszyn, 2018).

The Levels of Exclusion

We can assume that the violence against the Jews was related to their exclusion from the Polish national community. However, this exclusion was of a complex nature and took place primarily not on the political or institutional level, but on the level of social ties. In some part of Polish society Jews were perceived as "others", "redundant people" or even enemies. The intention of the perpetrators of antisemitic harassment was the social exclusion of Jews. Following Cezary Żołędowski, I assume that the term "exclusion" means an extreme form of discrimination, the expulsion of a given ethnic group outside the community (Żołędowski, 2005, p. 98). It is a truism to say that contempt or aversion to Jews were not an emanation of the views of Polish society as a whole. However, those feelings had to be common enough to leave an imprint on the collective memory of Holocaust survivors.

On the face of it, public mood contrasted with the official political line of the communist authorities towards the Jewish population, which was favorable and assumed a sizable margin of liberalism. The postwar emancipation proclaimed by the communists had all the hallmarks of an inclusive policy and equal rights for Jews, something that they did not have before 1939. Jewish social and cultural institutions were established in cities, as were several organizations and parties. Also production cooperatives, schools, newspapers, cinemas, theaters and youth kibbutzim were instituted. The Jews were granted unlimited access to university education and administrative jobs. In contrast to the Soviet Union, left-wing and centrist Zionist organizations, which openly encouraged the Jews' departure for Palestine, operated legally in Poland. In the western borderland – the former German lands which had recently been incorporated into Poland (the regions of Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania) – to where more Jewish repatriates from the USSR had been directed, an attempt was made to create a *yidisher yishev* (Jewish settlement) project (Aleksiun, 2002; Kichelewski, 2021; Rykała, 2007; Wasserstein, 1997).

On the other hand, the declared inclusive policy was only of a propaganda character in many dimensions. Legally operating Jewish organizations were under surveillance by the secret political police. For the first two years after the end of the war, despite repeated requests, the authorities were unable to cope with the waves of antisemitic harassment and ensure the safety of Jews. In addition, Jewish citizens had problems with the restitution of private and communal property confiscated by the Nazis and taken over by the state treasury or by the new, private owners after the war (Cieślińska-Lobkowicz, 2014; Kuklík, 2017).

From the point of view of internal policy, the mass emigration of Jews suited the authorities in Poland. Before World War II national minorities had accounted for over 30% of the population, which caused many problems and conflicts. As a result of the war, the Holocaust, the deportations and border shifts, Poland became almost monoethnic. For the new authorities it seemed to be a good change because the state was easier to manage, especially under the conditions of an undemocratic system. The communist government had no social legitimacy but had a lot of problems with the economic situation, the opposition, armed underground, and also problems with remnants of national minorities like Ukrainians. And Jews also posed a problem for the communist government due to such issues as property restitution, assimilation and the hostile attitude towards them in some part of Polish society. The emigration of the Jews meant that at least one problem would be solved by itself. Thus, the communist government did not encourage or interfere in the mass flight of Jews, but rather turned a blind eye to it.

Violence as a Factor of Escape Before the Kielce Pogrom

The most glaring form of exclusion was open aggression against Jews, which had a significant impact on the attitudes towards emigration and on the activity of the Bricha in Poland. Source research has demonstrated that each case of murder or violence triggered a vigorous reaction among the Jewish community traumatized by the Holocaust and, multiplied by rumor, caused a local panic and resulted in decisions to leave Poland.

Before the Kielce pogrom, the pro-departure mood had intensified, among others, in the aftermath of the Cracow pogrom (11 August 1945). The Jews were already falling prey to violence in the chaos of the last months of the war. On 13 August 1944, the managing board of the Jewish Committee in Lublin called a meeting to discuss the safety of the survivors, where acts of assault against the Jews in the Lublin region were discussed (Cała, 2014). In October 1944, the head of the Jewish Section at the Polish Committee of National Liberation, Shlomo Hershenhorn, wrote in a report: "In Izbica, Sandomierz and Tarnobrzeg the population is hostile towards the Jews and for this reason they want to leave the country" (Archiwum Akt Nowych [hereinafter AAN], Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego [hereinafter PKWN], XI/6, fol. 19).

The communists disseminated a statement according to which the responsibility for anti-Jewish violence after the war lied with the anti-communist underground movement, linked with the government in exile. This was a fruit of the propaganda of the day, intended for use in the current political struggle; but this does not mean that the Polish guerrillas were entirely innocent – among the perpetrators of murders committed on Jews there were members of anti-communist underground units (Bańkowska et al., 2009; Grabski, 2019; Kończal, 2020; Kopciowski, 2007; Tokarska-Bakir, 2017).

On 17 February 1945, in the small locality of Sokoły, units commanded by Kazimierz "Huzar" Kamiński from the Citizens' Home Army (Armia Krajowa Obywatelska, AKO) and Karol "Zemsta" Gasztoft from the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ) murdered seven Jews, including a four-year-old girl and a thirteen-year-old boy (Pyżewska, 2005). A day later, the unit commanded by Józef "Wołyniak" Zadzierski (NSZ and National Military Organization, Narodowa Organizacja Wojskowa, NOW) murdered ten Jews, including three children, in Leżajsk (Surdej, 2018). Two months later, a report of the Armed Forces Delegation (Delegatura Sił Zbrojnych, DSZ) read as follows:

> The continuing anti-Jewish action, conducted mainly by the National Military Union (Narodowe Zjednoczenie Wojskowe, NZW), frightened the Jews and made [them] emigrate to the West. Generally, they used to engage in trade and had special privileges. Currently we can see, and hear, complaints that they have nothing to do here. Russia, too, ceased to exist for them. (Surdej, 2018, p. 338)

Most of the postwar assaults remain the work of "unknown perpetrators". Only in March 1945 there were 117 cases of brutal assault committed against Jews, of which 108 ended in death: 21 in Białystok voivodship, 33 in Lublin voivodship, 35 in Warszawa voivodship, 23 in Rzeszów voivodship and 5 in Kielce voivodship (AAN, Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej [hereinafter MAP], file no. 786). In April 1945, officials of the Nationalities Section of the Political Department at the Ministry of Public Administration reported that "in some part of Polish society the mood is exceedingly antisemitic" and added that in the territories liberated from under the German occupation (mostly in the Lublin and Białystok lands) some 130 Jews had been murdered for antisemitic reasons, because of which "the pro-emigration mood is on the increase. Jews are leaving illegally for Romania and Czechoslovakia […]. About a hundred Jews departed from Częstochowa alone. The illegal emigration of Jews from Poland to Palestine through Romania is probably coordinated by some Zionist elements" (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Warszawie [hereinafter AIPN BU] 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 163).

In the summer of 1945 another wave of persecution against the Jewish population was on the rise. The first large-scale riots occurred on 11 and 12 June 1945 in Rzeszów, resulting in the survivors' departing from the city *en masse* (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 140). The next pogrom took place on 11 August 1945 in Cracow – the mob beat and wounded some Jews, and one person, the 56-year-old Róża Berger, was killed by a bullet that pierced the door of her flat. The impulse for the antisemitic violence was given by the rumors, repeated in the entire country, about the ritual killings of Polish children perpetrated by the Jews; a groundless but long-established excuse. After the pogrom, the number of illegal emigrants increased at once and the Voivodship Office in Cracow was flooded with applications for departure from Poland (Cichopek-Gajraj, 2014).

Information about the "emigration panic" or "pro-emigration mood" quickly became a rhetorical figure, repeated in almost every report that described the situation of the Jewish

population in Poland. According to those documents, as early as in 1945 the main reason for the "pro-emigration mood" was the lack of sense of security caused by the frequent antisemitic murders and "excesses": "The pro-emigration mood is very strong and widespread", reads a Ministry of Public Administration report from early August 1945, so one written just before the Cracow pogrom and almost a year before the Kielce pogrom, "the majority of the Jewish population is waiting for legal emigration, and a few Jews are emigrating illegally, mostly to Palestine" (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 140). The number of Jews choosing the latter option was growing from month to month.

Another effect of the "pogrom atmosphere" was the influx of Jews from smaller localities to larger ones; in these cases, the decision to emigrate was taken afterwards. Over the next six months before the Kielce pogrom the situation did not improve, even though the authorities issued a declaration promising to fight antisemitism. The anti-Jewish atmosphere was fueled by the arrival of a wave of Jewish repatriates from the USSR. Attacks on repatriation transports and cases of Jews being dragged out of passenger trains claimed an unknown number of lives. Politically motivated murders and killings related to acts of assault and robbery continued to occur. In the period between January and September 1946 at least 162 Jews were killed (Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego [hereinafter AŻIH], Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce [hereinafter CKŻP], 303/I/11, fol. 143–145). On 5 February 1946, a unit of the Freedom and Independence organization (Wolność i Niezawisłość, WiN) commanded by Leon "Jastrząb" Taraszkiewicz attacked the small town of Parczew in the Lublin region, vandalizing and looting Jewish shops and homes; three Jews were killed. After this event, the Jewish community of Parczew, some 200 people altogether, left the town in panic.

Some events that greatly stirred the Jewish community, including the Bricha activists, took place still before the Kielce pogrom. Throughout the late April and early May 1946, a total of 25 Jews (12 women, 10 men and 3 children aged 12 to 14) were killed in the Podhale region. All of them were *en route* to Slovakia, from where they wanted to cross, illegally, into the American occupation zone in Germany. They were killed by the guerrillas from the unit commanded by Józef "Ogień" Kuraś (Panz, 2015). These killings caused a widespread panic and an uncontrolled wave of departures from Poland. Citing data obtained from the former members of Bricha, Yehuda Bauer estimates the number of Jews who crossed the border into Czechoslovakia in the period between 10 and 16 May 1946 in the vicinity of Kudowa in Lower Silesia, for which they made use of the services of local smugglers, at some 800 men and women (Bauer, 1970). After the wave of killings, the Bricha ceased to send refugees by the southern route towards Slovakia, which in any case was at that time still being used only by Zionists from Cracow and Katowice.

The Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP) activists sent many petitions concerning "the Jewish population's catastrophic state of security" (AIPN BU 00231/146, vol. 1, fol. 133). After the Cracow pogrom, they addressed, among others, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry

of Justice, demanding that a decree on fighting antisemitism be issued (AIPN BU 1572/48, fol. 71). They proposed that all the Jewish organizations and institutions be issued firearms, that the cases of antisemitism be reported to foreign press, and that the perpetrators of pogroms and murders be routinely sentenced to death (AŻIH, CKŻP, 303/I/11, fol. 64–66). Subsequent petitions were submitted in June 1946 after a series of attacks against Jews traveling on passenger trains, and killings of Jews perpetrated again in the Podhale region by the guerrillas of Captain "Ogień" (AŻIH, CKŻP, 303/I/11, fol. 144–145). By the end of June 1946, at least 46,000 Jews illegally left Poland.

Conclusion: Escape, Ethnic Cleansing or Emigration?

There are some semantic doubts and terminological confusions about the question which term is better for the description of Jewish departures from Poland. The word "emigration" brings up an association with voluntary departure. By contrast, the Hebrew word "Bricha", which means 'escape', is associated with a dangerous situation and necessity. If Bricha was a forced migration, does it mean that we should consider it as a case of ethnic cleansing? According to the Final Report of the Commission of Experts on the Former Yugoslavia (S/1994/674), the definition of ethnic cleansing presupposes the existence of identified perpetrators who commanded the action of systematic forced removal of ethnic groups from a given area with the intent of making a region ethnically homogeneous. In my opinion, it is difficult to point out one specific center that directed the anti-Jewish violence and pogroms after 1944 in Poland and one critical reason for these acts. At the same time, however, these crimes and pogroms had some characteristics of ethnic cleansing as they amounted to attempts of forced removal of the whole ethnic group from a specific area (city, village, region). Undoubtedly, this thread opens up new interpretative possibilities for researchers.

The Holocaust certainly influenced the feeling of marginalization and exclusion among the survivors in Poland. The destruction of the Jewish world caused a sense of loneliness and increased the fear. After the war, the political idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine met with a huge, massive desire to find a way out of the situation in which the survivors found themselves. And for that reason, the post-catastrophic Zionism became more than just a doctrine but also a chance for a new life for thousands of traumatized people. It is believed that the Zionists would not have been able to implement the idea of an independent Jewish state in the Middle East in such a short time if the moods among the survivors in Europe were different. But it was anxiety and fear that dominated among them, coupled with an unwillingness to stay in the land where entire Jewish families and communities were murdered by the Nazis.

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Przemoc jako powód wyjazdów Żydów z Polski w latach 1945–1946

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia przemoc jako czynnik wpływający na powojenną emigrację ocalałych Żydów z Polski. Autorka zakłada, że przemoc wiązała się z wykluczeniem Żydów z polskiej wspólnoty narodowej. Wykluczenie to miało jednak złożony charakter i odbywało się w pierwszej kolejności nie na poziomie politycznym czy instytucjonalnym, ale na poziomie więzi społecznych. Przez część społeczeństwa polskiego Żydzi byli postrzegani jako „inni", „ludzie zbędni", a nawet wrogowie. Proklamowana przez komunistów powojenna emancypacja zaowocowała polityką inkluzji i prawnym zrównaniem Żydów, choć w praktyce nawet w okresie tzw. autonomii żydowskiej (1945–1949) równouprawnienie nie dotyczyło wszystkich obszarów (np. restytucji mienia). W czasach kryzysu społecznego, gospodarczego i politycznego emigracja Żydów była zjawiskiem korzystnym dla władz. Dlatego też, choć rząd komunistyczny nie zachęcał do wyjazdów, to jednocześnie przymykał na nie oko.

Słowa kluczowe: emigracja; wykluczenie; marginalizacja etniczna; relacje polsko-żydowskie; przemoc; antysemityzm

Citation